THE WIND IN THE TEMPLE

EDMUND JOHN

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THE WIND IN THE TEMPLE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

"THE FLUTE OF SARDONYX"

(For Press appreciations see pp. 55—58.)

THE WIND IN THE TEMPLE

POEMS

BY

EDMUND JOHN

AUTHOR OF

" THE FLUTE OF SARDONYX "

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To
MAUD CHURTON BRABY

NOTE

Several of the following poems have already appeared in various periodicals, and they are included in the present volume by the courteous permission of the Editors of "The English Review," "The British Review," "Colour," "The Gypsy," and "The Anthology of Trees."

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AUTUMN
(To T. J.)

. . . A broken blossom, a dead rose enshrined
In odours of the wood, brown briers twined
  About an ancient stone . . .
A leaf of withered amber in the wind
  Drifts on alone.

In the still hollows the curled vapours seem
To mourn; and on dim grass sunk to a dream
  Of shrouded amethyst,
Like fallen stars white scattered petals gleam
  Through the blue mist.

The wood is soundless, save where gems are shed
From dripping branches, soft like laughter sped
  Away from eyes that weep
On the pine-carpet and the dead leaves spread
  By hands of Sleep.

Singing is fled, frail music of the merle
Is lost like Love; and like a dead child's curl
  A curved gold rose-leaf rests.
Each needle of the pines has its own pearl
  Of vanished quests.

The last sad fires of purple heather set
In a grey pall of mist, seem like Regret,
  Whose blood, fallen and proud,
Traces strange crimson symbols even yet
  Upon its shroud.

. . . A yellow fern ; a mystic silent sea
Of bracken, pale, breast-high ; a fallen tree
  Half-veiled by the moist breath
Of the dim forest, calm as though there be
  Content in death . . .

Black ancient pines watch round a pool of glass
Set in the forest's heart ; the ashen grass
  Dreams deathlike on the slope
Where Autumn crept last night to see Love pass,
  And buried Hope.

PHANTASY

(To C. H. S. J.)

Silence as of eternity, a halt of breath,
As unseen eyes that watch in sleep, that wake at death
  Hath fallen on the plain :
Only the pollard willows comprehend its spell,
The pollards, and the little hills where the sun fell
  With crimson stain.

The pale pool mirrors motionless the amber sky,
The air is dust of burnished bronze, a purple dye
  Hath changed the white wild rose
From peace to passion, and rich sombre colours creep
On vervain where the dew hath strung strange gems of sleep
  And no breeze blows.

There is a dreamless twilight in this mystic place
Of low dwarf-myrtles where the creepers interlace,
  Where gorse hath aureoled
Its stars with moon-wove gossamer, and all around
A faint unearthly light is rising from the ground
  Like pallid gold.

Then wakes a subtle sense of something strange and bright ;
Lo, by the tall white lilies a mellow mist of light,
  As of some old stained glass,
Clings round the shining form of one whom men call Love,
Whose wings are folded, and whose frail feet float above
  The unreal grass.

His body is like milk edged with rose-colour rare,
With vine and lure of hemlock in his red-gold hair,
  Night-kissed, that burns and gleams;
His grave sweet scarlet lips are parted voicelessly,
His eyes like stars reflected in a violet sea
  Of dawn and dreams.

And in his hand he clasps a chalice wrought by Death,
A cup that he withholdeth not nor offereth,
  With wine of wondrous blend
Of sweet and bitter, pressed by youthful pagan feet
And crowned with foam from where the tides of Lethe beat,
  At last, for end.

With limbs of ivory and curved mouth made for song,
Past the phantasmal shrubs the glory drifts along,
  Over illusive green
And copper of the grass, past the still pool of sleep
Bound by red poppies, and through odours sad and deep,
  Half-felt, half-seen.

Between the ashen pollards, set like minor notes
In some strange symphony, the shining wonder floats
  Held in nocturnal frame
Of lucent shadow on the hill of sunset's sighs,
Where stands a marble sepulchre against the skies
  Of fading flame.

Above the white cold columns hangs the ghostly moon,
And the dark spectral dead rise up for bitter boon
  Of sight of Love's closed wings,
And beat their pitiful dead breasts and die again,
Unshrived, of their old longing and the old hot pain
  Of far-off things.

IN THE WOOD

(To S. L.)

. . . Night, and the amber moon,
And the vast dreamy hyacinthine sky;
And deep below, the valley and the sigh
Of sleeping lakes in June . . .

Upon the silent hill
Dream through the luminous dark the mystic trees,
And in the vales they break through misty seas
Like islands dim and still.

The hills are crowned with sleep,
Yet here within this lonely wood moon-girt
There seems a vivid consciousness alert,
Subtle and still and deep.

The scents of night are thrown
Over my hair; the shadowy boughs enlace
Themselves like arms that dream of some embrace
The years have turned to stone.

And as I lean my cheek
Against the rough bark of this sycamore,
Like surf that sobs on some forgotten shore,
I hear dead voices speak.

The wind creeps up the slope,
  And calls from out the leaves and moonlit bowers
  The whispers of lost children like frail flowers
Upon the grave of Hope.

The murmuring branches sway
  With gesturing hands; the subtle voices speak
  Of all the sweet lost things men used to seek
Before the world grew gray.

And each tree seems to be
  Itself an incarnation of the past,
  Some swift slain moment captured and held fast
By the wood's sorcery.

The glade sighs, and I see
  Dim faun-like forms, and through the parted fan
  Of moonlit leaves there peers the face of Pan
Set in night's phantasy.

The odour warm and sweet
  Of the nocturnal pines dream-clad,
  Is all the perfume of Love's body, sad
As laughter over-fleet.

And in the scented hollow,
By the rhododendrons, Hyacinthus lies;
Blood on his slim kissed limbs, and in his eyes
The bright tears of Apollo.

Aye, touch my lips, O leaves,
And brush against my brow, for I would learn
To sing these dreams in gold words that shall burn
To Spring the Winter eves.

Strange pictures on the moon
The branches trace; the flickering foliage sings,
Like some far-off Greek chorus, of bright things
From some once brighter June.

Wind, wind in the leaves—
No more? And do the sighs of night delude
With whisperings of some long-dead multitude
Whose robes the moonlight weaves?

ICHABOD

(To W. R. S. J.)

Visions and autumn mists, and the strange hush
  Born of unbroken endless dreaming, dwell
  In this deserted garden with its spell
Of sighs, its crumbling dial, its dying flush
  Upon the leaves where once Youth's sunlight fell.

The moist breath of the faint October wind
  Sighs through the solitary trees;
  Lost petals line the emptied treasuries
Of June, and the neglected tendrils bind
  To the lone gates only dim memories.

The birds have fled; the mournful branches droop
  Over the weed-clad paths; the briers hold
  Dead blossoms in their weary arms, and old
And desolate the wistful willows stoop
  Over the rose-trees' deepening brown and gold.

An alley of chrysanthemums forlorn
  Leads to an empty seat of wind-worn stone,
  Scarred deep by many years, and overgrown
With clinging moss; the rhododendrons mourn
  Above its ruin, sombre and alone.

And everywhere the fallen leaves are strewn,
In mellowed heaps and like a scattered chain,
—Dead leaves, lost hopes, with tears of quiet rain,
That fell from the grey drifting clouds at noon,
Filling their withered lifeless hearts in vain.

Within encircling melancholy trees
The old house rises desolate and still,
And round the empty porch and on each sill
Clings clematis in faded fantasies,
Half-veiled by dreaming vapours wan and chill.

Upon the lintels the pale lichens creep,
And wind and rain have stained the grey stone green ;
The bloomless climbing roses pine and lean
Their dying leaves against the wall ; and sleep
Has stolen on the gloomy pond unseen.

Unlifted silence like a dream in death,
Dwells here. Behind the blackened windows drear
Dim ghostly faces seem to move and peer
Into the ruined garden where the breath
Of the moist earth rises from Autumn's bier.

There is a room whose windows face the east,
  Where, in the far-off days, the early light
  Of summer dawns fell on a bed all white
And stainless, and the joyous sun released
  Life and the songs of childhood from the night.

And through the open casement came the scent
  Of summer flowers and the clean morning air.
  Ah, sweet awakenings of youth! How fair
The future smiled; with what high hopes he went!
  What changed return, with dreams become despair.

Ghosts, ghosts! How empty are the shadowy rooms,
  How black the windows! Through the stillness beat
  Echoes of youth and summer over-fleet.
The flowers are dead, the rose no longer blooms,
  The brown leaves rustle underneath one's feet.

Wild brambles wreathe the lonely steps untrod,
  And on the darkened door that keeps its tryst
  With shadows that the lips of Sleep have kist,
Is writ in pallid letters—" ICHABOD,"
  Decked with dead pearls by fingers of the mist.

LITANY OF THE SEVEN DEVILS

(To M. C. B.)

There are Seven Devils in my heart,
That sleep through wintry days, but in the nights of June
Pour forth their vials before the half-veiled violet moon,
And lave their limbs with incense sweet and curious,
And fling red roses where white lilies had been strewn.

There are Seven Devils in my heart;
And when one stirs and wakes, I start, and feel soft-pressed
The delicate satin body slide upwards o'er my breast,
Veiling my eyes and lips with perfume sensuous,
Full of elusive music and a strange unrest.

There are Seven Devils in my heart;
And one is lithe and dark and warm, with shining eyes
Of deep imaginings, and subtle hands like sighs
That fall upon my skin, and poignant finger-tips
That touch my soul to madness bright that crucifies.

There are Seven Devils in my heart;
One has a voice like flutes entwined with jessamine,
That haunts the lotus-paths my strange thoughts wander in,
And stirs the summer aisles of moonlit odorous flowers,
Which lead to the pale temple of forbidden sin.

There are Seven Devils in my heart;
And one is young and agile, with limbs slim and bare
And scented with the lure of youth, and eyes that snare
With the frail call of dawn, and wayward heart wound round
By delicate wickedness like some half-wanton prayer.

There are Seven Devils in my heart;
One with the burning hands of God, and words that beat
With lordship o'er men's souls and bodies—power sweet
And terrible, evil and good, that can call forth
Children and flowers of Spring from Winter's winding-sheet.

There are Seven Devils in my heart;
And one, with my own eyes and voice from the lost years,
Holds up an opal mirror set with pearls like tears,
And dreams my own dead dreams; and my maimed hopes
he knows,
And sees each deed, and all the words I say he hears.

There are Seven Devils in my heart;
And one, upon whose forehead gleams a wondrous name,
With ivory limbs and kissed feet shod with lambent flame,
Calls with gold wings toward the unattainable,
And bids me trample heaven and hell, honour and shame.

There are Seven Devils in my heart;
And one there is who stands upon the eastern slope
At dawn, when Day flings off Night's purple cope.
Him most of all I fear; master of pain is he;
His eyes are sad, his path a circle, and his name is Hope.

There are Seven Devils in my heart,
  With strange elusive eyes,
  And sensuous lips, and sighs
  Of night, and tears which rise
From bitter memories that smart.
Are they Seven Devils set apart—
  Or is it some disguise
Of Angels who shall soon depart?

LUX PERPETUA
(To R. R. W.)

(On a fragment, preserved in Athenæus, of an ancient legend of Samos)

The white sand stretches ghostly to the sea,
—The tranquil sea that sombrely
  Circles the shore in a dark line inset
With leaping pools of liquid silvery fire—
The great moon floats above, and all desire
  Seems twined around the dead it would forget.

Diaphanous black curtains of the night,
Like some Plutonic breath beneath the moon's still light,
  Trail o'er the edges of the smooth wide shore;
The shadowy land curves down, mystic and sweet
With tufts of samphire where the lost sun's heat
  Shall lave the hero's dead calm limbs no more.

The perfume of the rhododendron caves
Mingles with cool salt odours of the waves,
  Colours the still nocturne of sea and land,
And dreams beneath the slanting trees that grow
Upon the overhanging cliffs and throw
  Deep purple shadows on the shining sand.

A sea-bird circles darkly round the moon;
The air is tender with the youth of June;
  There is no sound save liquid music clear
Of the small rippling waves that break and die
And fade away in foam, and fading sigh
  Soft songs come back awhile from yester-year.

He lies there restful by the summer sea,
Dumb and immobile as carved ivory—
  This young dead hero Sleep hath set apart—
What unstirred ashes of a golden fire!
How stilled the passionate hopes of his desire,
  How quiet now the throbbing of his heart.

He is anointed for some festal rite,
His lids are closed, and on his lips the night
  Hath laid her perfumes and her seal of dreams;
And every limpid glittering ripple calls
To dead ears, and lifts itself to gaze, and falls
  Into the sliding foam that breaks and gleams.

At head and feet four slender lamps are set,
That throw swift shadows of strange violet;
  The flames gleam steady in the windless night,
With amber haloes swaying to and fro,
And cast on the dead limbs a subtle glow
  That mingles with the cold moon's silver light.

Silent from the dim shadowy purple land,
A youth comes forth across the moonlit sand,
  More beautiful than Love, more calm than Death,
With deep eyes that shall ever seek in vain,
And tragic lips stained with the lees of pain,
  And memories of piteous words unsaid.

He waits a space by the dead hero's side,
And on his slim fair body falls the tide
  Of mingled light that shines upon the dead;
He bends, and by the couch of rue and vine
Places two costly cups of bubbling wine,
  Amidst the splendid feast that he has spread.

He scatters scarlet roses on the sand,
A ruin of red petals from his hand
  Falls on the little waves that sigh and beat;
He twines his flowers dreaming of some old vow,
And wreathes a garland round the dead man's brow,
  Then sits serene at those still, icy feet.

The flames are flickering in the restless air,
A faint breeze lifts his hyacinthine hair,
  Freeing its perfumes like the ghosts of joy.
The minutes fall; the tide creeps up, its hymns
Sound like an elegy; it laps the limbs
  Of the dead hero and the watching boy.

AFTERMATH
(To W. G. F.)

Lo, thou hast taken all!
  My sight is gone with the lost gold
  Of thy wild hair, kissed, aureoled
Like fire where my tears fall.

My ears are sealed to song,
  Save of thy voice; and on my mouth
  Dream of thy breath from the veiled South
Is lying the pale night long.

Thy feet are on the throne
  Of my dead soul; thy strange eyes gaze
  Far off; and rain of ruined days
Falls on my lids alone.

DEATH-SONG
(To S. S.)

I have done sweet things, though I go down to die,
  Sipped honey, though I drink from Lethe now,
Danced to the viols, however still I lie,
  Wreathed garlands gay, though grim shall be my brow.

Along the path of pomegranates I passed,
  And followed the fair flower-flung way of flutes,
And in the orchard where spring scents were cast,
  Culled, over-carelessly, Youth's first flushed fruits.

I did dream with the lotus on my lips
  Beneath the sensuous oleander tree,
And heard Pan's music where the river slips
  Like some slim maid into the sapphire sea.

I have poured out the spikenard of my soul
  Upon the altars of strange gods, set round
With vials of myrrh, and mystic perfumes that unroll
  Themselves like incense-smoke upon the ground.

And at the feast I flung pale pearls of hope
  Mid scarlet roses scattered on the floor,
And saw the lithe young gilded wine-boys grope
  For gems their own feet crushed for evermore.

The sensuous music shook, the cymbals clashed,
  The dancing-maidens with strange perfumed breath
And vine-wreathed bodies and white limbs that flashed,
  Danced marvellously, hotly . . . into death.

Have I forgot these things?—A memory swims
  Of some I dreamed I loved, of my mouth bruised
By passion of young restless ivory limbs,
  And soul and body in one mad fire fused.

Your name is darkened; but ofttimes it seems
  Your clinging lips and body I still hold
Against me, fierce and passionate, in my dreams,
  Your satin skin hot like a flame of gold.

And your young wayward naked heart throbs yet
  On mine, and your lithe youthful limbs entwine
My own; and the faint vein so frailly set
  In your slim neck makes mad my mouth like wine.

I bartered the to-morrows for your kiss,
  I was less wise than tender with your youth,
You were content to slay me with brief bliss,
  —Then bitterness of one more barren truth.

These things I knew, and they were swift and sweet,
  Aye, sweet their shame—but sweet so long ago!
For pain and passion both are fair and fleet;
  Death only is eternal, dreaming slow.

And though tears jewel Love and spring from Laughter,
  And joy comes but to teach us how to weep,
And each kiss has red wounds that follow after,
  The quiet end of it is always sleep.

I have done sweet things, though I go down to die,
  If I missed the best, and have bleeding heart and feet,
Yet in the dark on my still lips shall lie
  Some smile of triumph in my last defeat.

ON DEBUSSEY'S "SHEPHERD-BOY"
(To R. A. H.)

. . . Breath of the early dawn,
And cool sweet odours of the dew-washed leaves,
And hope that wakes at daybreak after eves
Forlorn.

The vales are amethyst,
The sky is pearl; the wild grass on the hill
Just stirs, and in the hollows slumbers still
The mist.

And half-real as a dream,
The little shepherd sits upon a mound,
With body white, a goatskin flung around
Its gleam.

He is lifting to his lips
His pipe of reed; he raises violet eyes
To the mist-wreaths that cross the mellowing skies
Like ships.

He is playing the song of dawn,
And cool and clear the notes are like pale pearls
And moonstones falling in a pool where swirls
A faun.

And as he plays he dreams
  Of gods, and woods, and peacock-coloured seas,
  And hears the liquid whispering prophecies
Of streams.

His boy's song drifts away;
  Behind the opal mists the copper sun
  Mounts up; for warm and sleepy, has begun
The day.

BALLADE OF FAREWELL
(To V——)

The path parts here; your road is fresh with dew;
'Tis time to turn your eyes away
From mine. To-morrow you shall say,
"He was my friend"; and I shall answer you,
Far off, "I am your friend alway."

The perfumed East, the warm winds from the South,
Chant round your virginal white throne
With voice and lure of things unknown:
Life laughs and calls you with his young red mouth,
And lo, you must go forth alone.

You must stand naked in the wind that blows
About your brow your soft, child's hair,
And brave and lonely make your prayer,
And weep sometimes, and smile, and pluck your rose,
With not a comrade anywhere.

For none can help you read the secret scroll
Of life; nor is there rest nor rod
To aid you on the path Love trod;
But all alone, if you would find your soul,
You must gaze in the eyes of God.

On some lone hill, or by the spreading fan
  Of palm or pine on summer days,
  Or by the winding watery ways
That dream in Delphic woods, you shall hear Pan,
  And learn, at last, the song he plays.

Oh sing it once before you must depart!
  And laugh, and be not over-wise—
  I have seen these things in your eyes,
And read deep secrets in your shy young heart,
  And heard Pain's laughter in your sighs.

Already you have seen upon the hills
  The ancient gods move joyously,
  As I once saw them wondrously;
And touched, in odours of young daffodils,
  Lips of Narcissus suddenly.

The Unattainable shall call you on
  With wide eyes lit by hope and pain,
  To fail and fall and hope again,
Until one day the Vision shall be gone,
  And you must sleep or wake in vain.

Where beauty is most fleet as some soft song
  The veiled Ideal bids us pray,
  And strange and swiftly fades away,
Because we have not strength to hold it long
  And live until the close of day.

O Vision Beautiful, beyond the shore
  Of dreams! how far it is, and sweet
  As dying odours frail and fleet
Of lilies locked behind Death's faithless door,
  —Sought eyes our own shall never meet.

And ever must we follow it in vain,
  Nor shall our hope nor pain avail,
  Nor eager eyes, nor lips grown pale:
And death there is for him who shall attain,
  And dreamless sleep for those who fail.

In places where he lingers least of all
  You shall find Love and make your cry
  To him and Death, and say good-bye
With his bright kiss on your closed lids for pall
  —It is the fairest way to die.

For you the ancient temple doors stand wide;
  Open your arms, be brave and strong
  Although the way seem over-long:
The great gods call you on the green hillside,
  Open your lips to them in song.

Eros shall lay young passion on your mouth,
  Apollo teach you notes divine,
  And Dionysus give you wine
Of life pressed out from the hot East and South
  Where children tread the purple vine.

And you shall teach your own soul how to weep,
  Shall steal from Syrinx piping near,
  Strange lyric music cool and clear,
And learn of Proserpine the way to sleep—
  Some day, at end of the dead year.

Great gifts the gods shall give—Oh fail them not
  When falls the hour of your despair,
  When sorrow strips your garden bare,
Lost is your lute and all your song forgot,
  —Fail not, for then the gods are there.

Fail not, but with your eyes towards the sky
  Gaze steadfast though your heart may break;
  Fail not, even for my poor sake,
That I may hear your singing where I lie,
  Through music that the wan winds make.

So shall your voice rise to Apollo's throne,
  So shall the prophecy I read
  Cling laurel-wise about your head,
And scent of hours we spent—how swiftly flown!
  Shall find us out amongst the dead.

Kiss my brow once, for there farewell is writ—
  A moment's pang while Love floats by,
  A catching of the breath, a cry . . .
Oh turn away, this is the end of it,
  This is the way all sweet things die.

This is the end of it; for seal a tear
  Upon half-uttered thoughts to-day
  Is set. To-morrow you shall say,
"He was my friend"; and I will answer clear,
  Far off, "I am your friend alway."

CARPE DIEM

(To old Omar, in his grave of withered vine-leaves)

Introibo ad altare Dei :
Ad Deum, qui lætificat juventutem meam.

Hear us, O veilèd Oracle of Truth,
Hear us who kneel at the fleet feet of Spring ;
Hear, and shew forth for our awakening
The mystery and the joy and pain of Youth !

" . . . A candle glimmering between two palls,
A kiss between Life's lips and mouth of Death—
Lo, even as these is Youth," Love answereth,
" As hope of summer while the rose-leaf falls."

Oh stay thy dreaming, open thy deep eyes—
The star of Youth is falling through Life's night
Of roofless sapphire to the ebonite
Silent unplumbed Abyss where Nothing lies.

Wilt thou for ever yearn for Joys that beat
Their passionate wild Wings in some Far Land ?
Nor ever wake nor stretch out thine hot hand,
When lo ! thy Joy lies longing at thy feet ?

And though thou tramplest it ere June be past,
And kiss its dying lips in thy despair,
And wipe its red torn breast with thy wild hair,
—Shalt bear away its perfume at the last !

Wilt thou for ever dream and lose To-day
For sake of some To-morrow fruitlessly?
For Pageant of July thou shalt not see,
Crush the frail Flowers of far more perfect May?

Set not thine eyes towards the unrisen Dawn,
—For thee the Day may never break . . . who knows?—
Nor weep for memory of some slain Rose,
Nor thy Dead Self—for dead things do not mourn.

Thou shalt grow old with gazing through the dark
At some vain world beyond the bounds of this:
And thy Reward, for lips thou didst not kiss,
Will profit little when thou liest stark.

Lo, here beneath the Moonlight and the Sun,
Lo, Here and Now, with Summer ambient,
Thou shalt find both Reward and Punishment
Enough for every Deed—THOU HAST NOT DONE.

Though there be poison in the Fruit we clutched
Athirst for Life—and our own souls the price—
From the Forbidden Trees of Paradise,
Yet sin we most to leave one Fruit untouched.

All that we seek, the Dream we idolize,
The Distant Vision our sad souls beseech,
Are close at hand all day within our reach,
But hidden by the Longing in our eyes.

Stretch forth thine arms and give thy lips to Youth,
For lo, the Blossom of his Mouth shall call
Thee once and vanish, and its Petals fall . . .
Wouldst lose thy Spring for a false Dream of Truth?

Wouldst sleep away the Hour most exquisite
That strikes but Once, when lo, that Sleep is near
Which wakes not? Wouldst crush Life to Death for fear
Of the Unknown that cometh after it?

Oh grasp thy Moment ere it be too late,
Death's Tide, Love's Wine, shall drown Regret for thee,
There is no Past, the Future shall not be,
—Only To-day, perfumed and passionate!

Seize thy swift Youth with its lithe loveliness,
Though thine own Blood shall colour it like Wine,
And thy Tears jewel it—hold it, 'tis thine,
Although the End is loss and bitterness.

And with those Tears and Blood shalt celebrate
  Thy sacrifice to Love, make sacrament
  Of Wine and Water thine own veins have blent,
With thine own Youth as Priest immaculate. . . .

—Thy Youth, Love's priest! Yet know, may flit away
  Ere thou canst grasp it—Oh seize it, though in sooth
  Thou shalt not keep this strange sweet scent of Youth
Enduring for a Night and dead at Day.

Oh tarry not! The Hour thou shalt depart
  Creeps near—let not June's Roses bloom in vain,
  Nor veil thine eyes because of Beauty's pain,
Nor let Love's limbs lie cold on thy faint heart.

Leave Rest and Sleep till Love and Life be ceased;
  —Thou and thy vivid youth one day shall lie
  Quiet enough beneath some moonlit sky,
Nor heed nor hear the Laughter at the Feast.

. . . Spring and the falling days, and a swift cloud
  Upon one's eyes at last! 'Tis well with thee—
  A pictured tapestry of Memory
Shall wrap thee round for thy eternal shroud.

Hardly canst thou believe thy fragrant breath
  And hot kissed heart and throbbing lips shall be
  Silenced, shut out—Beyond we cannot see,
We only know that all things die save Death.

Yet even so thyself shalt lie at last,
  Thy white still lids shut out the Summer Skies,
  The Worms creep in the sockets of thine eyes,
And Dust heaped o'er the Ruin of the Past.

I shall await thee cold and passionless,
  Though I shall see thee not, though sense be fled,
  Though I wake not to greet thee newly-dead,
I will await thee, stark and motionless.

And ye yet left—still beautiful with Bloom
  And Joy of Youth—will ye have thought of me
  Who sang my songs awhile beneath Youth's Tree?
Shall my voice reach you from the quiet tomb?

And will ye hear my music round the Bough,
  And in the Flowers the flaming Summer flaunts . . .
  And laugh with the pale ghost of me that haunts
Even this song that I am singing now?

Let be, let be, these things touch not the Dead—
  Love nor Forgetfulness nor Memory—
  Bring Roses to the mound that covers me,
—But wreathe them laughing round thine own live head!

And where I lie, 'neath the wild grass without,
  On my dead mouth a Kiss shall find re-birth
  That the slow rain which soaks through the grey earth
About my silent lips shall not wash out.

A SONG OF LIFE
(To M. J.)

As the youth of dawn's sweet breath
As Love's strange sad voice, though Death
  Come after, for its hour must sing;
Even as grass that withereth,
  —So is Spring.

As a Spring of lazuli
And jade, and pain of Love's reply,
  More wise than God, more deep than Truth,
Even as scent of flowers that die,
  —So is Youth.

As altar-fire which Night hath lain
On lips that their own blood shall stain,
  As lily-leaves that float above
Quiet waters that shall still thy pain,
  —So is Love.

As that silence calm and deep
The white untrodden mountains keep
  For ever; even as the breath
Of poppies round the pool of Sleep,
  —So is Death.

IN MEMORIAM

(To E—— S——, obiit April 11th, 1913)

Shadow of Sleep lies on you ; ended the high quest,
The bright hope, the vain courage. All the cry has passed
From your unanswering lips and from your quiet breast,
Where your still hands lie cross-wise in the night. Oh rest,
With calm closed lids, Oh rest at last,
With eyes that cannot see my tears,
With ears that cannot hear me weep,
Nor heed the dirge of the dead years,
Nor sobbing from the deep
Abyss of my distress :
Lie still at last and sleep,
Though I am comfortless,
For you at least shall keep
Gift of forgetfulness.
Shadow of that sweet sleep which seals the weary breath
Has fallen like the benediction of a bell
From some old tower, rung by the gentle hands of Death,
All sad and peaceful with the dream he offereth,
And mingling with unspoken words of your farewell.

Bexhill, April 11th, 1913.

Poems of the War

THE HUNS, 1914

Only the bent ghosts of pain, the grey phantoms of fear
Inhabit the desolate streets in the silence, and peer
Out from the charred, blackened windows. No more than the breath
Of the fresh fields shall stir the drawn lips of the dead whose blood dyes
Their own hearths, where from out the spent ashes dim spirals yet rise
Like the smoke of dark incense that burns on the Altars of Death.

All the prayers are stilled ; there is blood in the holy place,
And over the lintels, and splashed on the pale, lined old face
Of the dead peasant woman who lies where the hollyhock blows,
And blood on the breasts of the maiden who yesterday smiled,
And blood on the white broken body of each flower-like child,
Like red wine that is spilled on a petal of some fallen rose.

And blood there shall be on the throats of the devilish throng,
And an eye for an eye, and for every unnameable wrong
Anguish and death and despair shall find out a reward.
Lo, the clamour of battle is calling to all who are men
To succour the helpless, and vanquish and drive to their den
The murdering Huns who have drawn and shall die by the sword.

AVE INDI

The West is grey, and pale with sweat of pain,
  Save where the flicker of a funeral pyre
  Stabs the dull pallor with fine jets of fire,
And ashen cheeks are grim with some dark stain.

Gold is the East, and bright the Indian sea;
  And princes of a race that knows no fears
  Pour out their treasures of a thousand years,
And call to battle all their chivalry.

For lo, at last the East and West have met,
  In splendid friendship sealed by splendid blood;
  So shall they conquer death and stem the flood
That seethes from hell—and heaven shall not forget!

For every tortured child, and all the shame
  Of women slain, the Indian hosts shall bring
  Bitter reward; and through God's halls shall ring
Their mighty vengeance and eternal fame.

IN MEMORIAM

(To Field-Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar,
obiit November, 1914)

Rest, though the clamorous surge of war
  Follow thy peace to the great doors of Death;
As in thy fearless life, so now, the cannons' roar,
  The roll of drums, at thy last breath
Proclaim thee Conqueror!

The prophets and the warriors who have passed
  That way before thy coming, welcome thee;
The Angel's trumpet sounds a nobler blast,
  And kings and knights of the old chivalry
Now hail thee at the last.

Thy days, thy deeds, thy words of proven gold,
  Thy son, and last of all, thyself didst give
For Country's sake; and now the tale is told
  Thy splendid memory shall breathe and live
Till all men's hearts lie cold.

Extracts from Press Notices on "The Flute of Sardonyx," by Edmund John.

"*The Standard*," *September 2nd*, 1913.

Mr. John . . . revels in those beauties which the sight reveals, but he is also somewhat of a philosopher. . . . Many of his lines have a strong fascination, and to say the least of it, he is an extremely clever artist. His abundant talent is shown in "Salome."

"*The Times*," *August 28th*, 1913.

Mr. John . . . has a luscious imagination and a faculty for rich colour in words.

"*The New York Times*," *November 30th*, 1913.

The very first line of the very first poem in Mr. John's new book . . . simple and plain to bareness as it is, has something about it that warns us of magic to follow. And it does follow; not the particular magic it prepares us for, perhaps, but the indubitable magic that has now and then risen through English poetry. . . .

Mr. John's remarkable gift of weaving words to the similitude of colours and fragrances . . . at its best brings an illusion little short of magical. In "Rain," for instance, we get an almost physical sense of space and mystery, and of a solution of mystery eternally grasped at and eternally eluding. . . .

We cannot have too much poetry of this sort.

"*The Sunday Times*," *August 17th*, 1913.

There is no doubt about Mr. John having high poetic gifts; his verse has melody and fire and colour and sometimes even magic . . . as you read on the languor and the perfumes and the colours of the South seem to steal out on you from the poet's verses. He is singularly happy, indeed, at most times in creating the illusions of place and "atmosphere."

"*The Morning Post*," *September 1st*, 1913.

Mr. John's artistry in the use of words as gems and enamels is at its best in his barbaric and opulent "Salome" . . . the setting is sumptuous. . . . But we prefer him in a milder and more mellifluous mood; in such stanzas as the following we find lines . . . that are truly poetical and "of their own arduous fullness reverent." . . .

Press Notices—continued

" *The Outlook*," *August 30th*, 1913.

It is a first volume, and yet it places Mr. John in the very front rank of present-day poets. Here is no imitative suggestion. His work, as Mr. Phillips very truly says, is " not only distinctive but distinguished." He has the true marvel and colour and splendour of verse. His use of words is unusual, his extent of vocabulary astonishing. Inevitably does that overworked word " atmosphere " thrust itself forward, so magically does Mr. John depict a scene.

" *The English Review*," *September*, 1913.

He (Mr. John) is sensuous, no doubt . . . there is a haze of Christian imagery, and flowers, and death, and pain floating through these love-poems . . . the reader will find much of fine workmanship to be admired in them, of courage and veracious feeling; above all, a promise of still better things. . . . His verse is musical and harmonious beyond the common measure; in short, he is a refreshing phenomenon amid our herd of cold-blooded, hopelessly conventional songsters.

" *The Bookman*," *Christmas Number*, 1913.

Among these poets Mr. John is the one whose grasp equals his aim . . . every poem, every verse, every line, is visibly the work of one who has mastered his trade.

" *The Athenæum*," *May 7th*, 1913.

There can be no doubt that Mr. John is a sweet, and at times a powerful, singer.

" *The Tatler*," *September 10th*, 1913.

It is seldom that one comes across a new poet whose achievement is already so fine, whose future is so big with promise.

" *The World*," *August 26th*, 1913.

There is a haunting beauty in many of his lyrics.

Mr. James Douglas in " *The Star*," *May 16th*, 1913.

Mr. John . . . has a touch of genius. He is a lordling, if not a lord of language. His verses are bright with jewelled felicities.

" *The Literary World*," *March*, 1913.

His artistry shows itself in word-magic.

" *The Daily Citizen*," *July 29th*, 1913.

" Salome " is an Aubrey Beardsley picture in words. . . . The verse is gorgeous, Oriental and rich . . . it has a wondrous magic in it.

He has a delightful gift for pictorial language and words.

I am sure that beauty-lovers and most æsthetic lovers of Art will find much to delight them in "The Flute of Sardonyx."

"The Scotsman," July 24th, 1913.

Mr. John is a poet. He writes lines which nobody but a poet could write.

"The Yorkshire Observer," August 29th, 1913.

Mr. John's poetry is full of life, light and colour. . . . It is full of the glow of youth and beauty. It has music, too, and many of the lines have magic. . . . This book is one of rare promise, if not of entire fulfilment, and it stands boldly above most contemporary verse.

"Dublin Daily Express," August 14th, 1913.

It is easy to prophesy a fine future for Mr. John from the ability and insight displayed in this present volume.

"The Southport Guardian," September 10th, 1913.

Mr. Edmund John is one of our new singers. His first book on its first appearance made a great stir. . . . "The Flute of Sardonyx" contains much of performance and even more of promise. . . . He has a rare sense of colour and a strong sense of words; his verse pulsates with passion and with life. With him to live is to love; and to love is alternately to smile and to sorrow—and he expresses the joy and the pain with equal felicity and fervour. . . . Here in these poems is the spirit of song, the passion of youth, the seductive colour of life, and all the throbbings of hope and desire . . . this book will ensure a critical welcome to Mr. John's future work. Here, at any rate, is a singer—and a singer who is not afraid to sing his own songs in his own way.

"The Scots Pictorial," September 20th, 1913.

We hardly anticipated being whirled so passionately along. At first we rather resented the exotic emotionalism of Mr. John; but the colour and the "fine frenzy" of his verses baffled our resentment and entangled us into appreciation. He is a pantheistic Francis Thompson, a Francis Thompson who has torn the rosary from his breast, let fall the cloak from his shoulders, and leapt into the revels of love with a leopard skin around his loins! Mr. Edmund John is undoubtedly a poet. There are lines here and there that thrill the ear with their sheer beauty, lines that mark him to be more than a minor singer.

Press Notices—continued

" *The Birmingham Daily Post*," *September 6th*, 1913.

Mr. Stephen Phillips, who contributes an introduction to " The Flute of Sardonyx," hits exactly the right nail upon the head when he praises Mr. John's verses because they cannot be appraised at once and ticketed without hesitation . . . the impossibility of assigning Mr. John off-hand to any of the numerous " schools " of the day, does mean that he has courage and ability enough to stand by himself and work in his own way ; and he has the talent that makes it worth while to retain that independence. The creation of beauty, we take it, is his one conscious aim. And he can write lines that remain in the memory, while he has a delicate sense of rhythm . . . he inspires one with the desire to see more of his work.

" *Nottingham Guardian*," *October 28th*, 1913.

The verse in " The Flute of Sardonyx," by Edmund John, is good enough to stand on its own merits . . . he has a distinctive note. . . . His poetry has its own fire, sense of colour, and exaltation.

" *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph*," *August 7th*, 1913.

There is an originality about these poems, and an Oriental warmth and luxury of imagery, which parts them off from the rank and file of much modern verse, and gives them a distinction of their own. Then Mr. John's muse is inspired, and surely he has eyes to see, and sees for himself. There are some memorable lines.

" *The Dundee Advertiser*," *August 14th*, 1913.

Edmund John is of the school of Keats, though no slavish pupil . . . and his poetry comes to one with the impact of poignant experience. Its unescapable beauty promises to live in the memory.

" *Aberdeen Free Press*," *September 18th*, 1913.

Mr. John is a poet, and when he finds a subject, as in "Salome," which is in harmony with his rich sensuous imagery, he can be exceedingly powerful. . . . The opening lines of " Salome " strike the keynote of a poem that reproduces with wonderful power the atmosphere of the East.

" *The Glasgow Herald*," *August 18th*, 1913.

Mr. John is unquestionably a poet. . . . " Salome," the most important poem, is a purely realistic study. It is a verbal tour de force, with brilliant description and a cunningly ordered rhythm. . . . The writer has undoubted gifts.

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